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CHAPTER FIVE

VALUES, PRINCIPLES AND ELEMENTS



Don't be afraid of the space between your dreams and
reality. If you can dream it you can make it so.

--Belva Davis--

Values

The City of Indianapolis has used a balanced approach in creating this plan. Citizens were asked to dream about an ideal future, but then to set those dreams against a backdrop of demographics, technology and development markets.

In order to provide a philosophical structure to the plan, a series of value statements was adopted by the Indianapolis Insight Steering Committee. The actions and policies recommended by this plan are expected to both reflect and respect these values.

Value statements

Development of our city and county should meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

We should strive to achieve a balance of land uses, including a diversity of housing options, throughout the various parts of the county and the region. Balanced land use is important not only for tax base equity, but also for livable communities where people can live, shop, recreate and earn a living throughout the different phases of their lives.

New developments should be well planned, well built and well maintained so that they retain their value over the long haul. Established areas should be well maintained to retain (or regain) their value and to preserve their unique identity.

Education programs of the highest quality are vital to the health and well being of this community. We should encourage all citizens, regardless of age, to participate in the learning process throughout their lives. We should offer educational programs to individuals with a wide range of talents and abilities, enabling all members of the community to develop to their fullest potential. We must ensure that educational opportunities are available to all citizens, regardless of race, sex, religion, national origin or disability. We must maintain a world class educational system, providing programs of the highest quality to all citizens.

We should strive to maintain a healthy environment and to make appropriate improvements to the current state of the environment. Of particular importance are clean air, ground and surface water, conservation of natural features including wooded areas, and adequate parks and open space.

We should continue to improve our transportation system so that it is well-connected, convenient, and safe. We should provide a variety of transportation choices so that all people regardless of age or ability can travel throughout the region. Both the transportation system and the infrastructure system should anticipate and guide growth of the metropolitan area.

We should maintain and further develop a strong, diverse economy and to make efforts to attract and retain highly skilled and educated workers. Forces of disinvestment and decline should be countered with a variety of redevelopment and reinvestment activities wherever needed to maintain the vitality of the community.

The regional center should continue as the focus of the larger scale cultural events and venues, however we should support a variety of cultural activities within all parts of the city. We should respect historic structures and neighborhoods as the physical embodiment of our history and cultural identity.

As the center of an increasingly regional metropolitan area, Indianapolis should be a leader in planning-related cooperation and communication.

Land Use Principles and Elements

Land is a commodity of considerable importance in an urban community and is considered a key resource that requires skillful management. The land use decision-making and administration processes are the methods the City of Indianapolis uses to manage this important resource, and the Comprehensive Plan is the cornerstone upon which these processes are based.

To effectively utilize the Comprehensive Plan as a land management tool, the principles of the Plan and the elements of the General Land Use Maps must be understood.

Key Land Use Principles

Regionalism

Local governments' Comprehensive Plans have had to respond to changing problems and challenges, as urban centers have grown outward and matured. In recent years the citizens of the City of Indianapolis and Marion County have been engaged in public discussions and explorations of how Indianapolis will chart its future from a perspective that is increasingly regional. Indianapolis will remain the largest city in the central Indiana region; however, the rates of housing and population growth in Indianapolis have been exceeded by the rates of growth in the surrounding counties. Projections indicate that this situation will continue in the future.

Many citizens have strong interests in the vitality of several counties within the region because job, school, shopping and recreation destinations are not often found in the same municipalities or counties as their places of residence. Indiana statutes that enable local governments to establish comprehensive plans and regulate land use under zoning do not, however, mandate regional plans for land use, environmental quality, social services, parks and recreation, public safety, courts or education. Short of formal plans, central Indiana relies on informal, uncoordinated and often inconsistent regional planning efforts. While these voluntary activities benefit the community, the establishment of a more formal planning relationship in the nine county region would permit the land use coordination necessary to effectively manage difficult land use issues.

The Central Indiana economy operates on an increasingly regional scale. Marion County's employers draw upon the labor force from a large area, a commuter shed of more than nine counties. Regions, not individual cities, are actively competing for economic development expansion and business retention. During the past decade, economic development researchers

looked to certain “peer regions” offering many of the same amenities and strengths as Central Indiana. Many of these regions have pursued greater cooperation and collaboration among the governments, employers, institutions and citizenry. Regional cooperation is seen as an integral strategy to overall economic health. Indianapolis cannot ignore its competitor regions and should look to strengthen its assets in a very competitive world economy. The economic well-being of the entire region, however, will continue to depend upon the strength of the central county.

Additionally, natural systems do not respect the jurisdictional limits drawn by government declaration. Air currents spread air across the borders of counties, cities and towns. Watersheds collect and concentrate the drainage from urban and rural areas alike. Because of their size, amenities or physical setting, some parks and open space facilities serve the needs of an entire region. Multiple-use recreation and transportation corridors can be linked within a regional perspective.

Future plans should take into account current conditions and probable future growth within Marion County and its adjoining jurisdictions.

Balance of Land Uses

One of the objectives of land use planning is to balance the needs of a community with available resources. In practice, this balancing is often difficult to achieve. The challenges involve balancing multiple land uses with social, political, and economic goals, while striving to maintain the health and sustainability of the ecosystem. Adding to the complexity is the need to comply with natural resource regulations and to view the consequences of land use at both the local and national levels.

Initially, providing a balance of land uses involved issues of tax base equity. By forecasting the composition of a political unit, predicting the public revenue requirements based upon that forecast and providing sufficient quantities of industrial, commercial, residential uses to serve those requirements and minimize single-family residential tax rates, land uses could be considered balanced. However, while zoning and planning authority is consolidated in Indianapolis, certain vital public services such as school, police and fire protection remain segmented. As a result, 61 separate taxing districts exist. To achieve true tax base equity, land use must be “balanced” for each distinct taxing subdivision.

To further complicate the ability to balance land use, the Plan should minimize the isolation of families and individuals based on age, income, race or disability by recommending a range of residential uses to support the population. While the construction of custom homes and commercial uses catering to high-income clientele are usually not controversial, the construction of multi-family residential housing or “affordable” single-family residential developments are often controversial. Additionally, certain commercial and industrial land uses are considered objectionable due to actual or perceived negative impacts; however, these uses may exist as a result of a viable market or are necessary for a fully functioning economy. In this instance, therefore, balancing land use means equitably distributing land uses throughout the City. Finally, the impact of land use on the physical and economic environment must be considered. The possible impact of land uses on air quality, water quality, flood control, and drainage

must be estimated and mitigated. Excessive light and noise can make otherwise compatible land uses poor neighbors. The capacity of the infrastructure needed to serve an area should be evaluated in determining the intensity of development for that area. Employment and residential areas should be balanced geographically to minimize transportation problems. The need for open space, woodlands and public recreational areas will continue to grow as the amount of available land diminishes.

Intensity of Land Use

Intensity of use refers to the level of activity associated with a land use. Generally, the higher the level of activity associated with a land use, the higher the intensity. Measures of an area's level of activity include the number of people and vehicles that enter and exit the area; the area's physical development; and the area's impact on adjacent land uses as well as the impact on the sewer, water, drainage, transportation and ecological systems. In this context, the "impact" of a land use is generally associated with the negative effects on nearby land uses and the burden it places on existing systems.

Effective communities are planned and designed to function well. Ideally, a community would be built around a dense mixed-use core and radiate outward with less intensive uses. Indianapolis is fortunate to have a number of mixed-use cores throughout the city upon which to build. While the Regional Center and the "Old City" are important centers of activity, various included and excluded cities and towns also serve as important mixed-use building blocks for a vital City. While mixed-use development should be encouraged, in those instances where mixed-use is impractical the following principles of land use planning and intensities should be used to formulate the planning recommendations contained in the Comprehensive Plan:

- High intensity commercial and industrial land uses should be clustered or assembled in groups to form an activity node.
- The more traffic associated with a land use, the greater the street capacity required to serve the land use. Higher intensity land uses should be located adjacent to major roadways and lower intensity land uses can be on local streets.
- The greater the differences between the intensities of adjacent land uses, the greater amount of buffering necessary to shield the uses.
- The capacity of infrastructure needed to serve an area should be evaluated in determining the intensity of development for that area.
- Redevelopment proposals and infill development should be compatible with surrounding land uses.

Key Land Use Plan Elements

To provide recommendations that are consistent with the requirements of state law, reflect the values of the community and address the complex issues identified during the update process, five distinct elements must be considered when making a recommendation on a proposed land use. These elements are small area plan overlays, the primary land use recommendation, secondary land use recommendation, indexing, and critical areas.

Small Area Plan Overlay

In certain instances, a sub-area, neighborhood or corridor plan exists which must be referenced in order to ascertain the primary land use recommendation. In order to avoid unnecessary duplications or contradictory recommendations, the General Land Use Maps will contain no land use recommendation for these areas. The small area plans are more detailed studies of the affected area and will contain a detailed analysis of the area in question and proposed land use and zoning maps.

It should be noted that during the update process, all small area plans were evaluated for continued applicability. In the event that a small area plan exists for an area, but is not included on the Small Area Plan Overlay, it was determined that significant changes to the area had rendered the land use recommendations of the plan obsolete. In those cases, the small area plan can be referenced for appropriate detail, but the land use recommendations of the General Land Use Maps supercede the land use and zoning recommendations of the small area plan.

Additionally, small area plans will continue to be adopted as updates to the Comprehensive Plan subsequent to the adoption of this document and the General Land Use Maps. In these instances, the primary land use recommendation of the small area plan would supercede the recommendation of the General Land Use Map; however, any secondary land use recommendation should be incorporated into recommendations on land use petitions.

Primary Land Use Categories

Primary land use categories broadly define development by density range and/or use, and should be considered the most appropriate use for the land. In the application of these recommendations for land use decisions, these recommendations provide the starting point for a determination of the appropriateness of a land use request. While the Plan anticipates that the current local conditions, the character of existing structures and uses, the most desirable use for the property, the conservation of property values, and the tenets of responsible development and growth will also be evaluated during the decision-making process, the recommended land use provides the basis for the evaluation of these factors. The Plan also anticipates that the impacts of any deviation from the recommendation of the Plan would be comparable to the typical impacts of the primary land use recommendation.

The most appropriate primary land use category is recommended for each area on the map. Because the Comprehensive Plan assumes that Marion County will be fully developed, the

Plan’s recommendations cover every parcel of land in the county either thorough the General Land Use Map or the appropriate small area plan.

The following categories are used to designate primary land use recommendations on the land use plan maps:

RESIDENTIAL

- Residential Development greater than 0.00 and equal to or less than 1.75 units per acre.
- Residential Development greater than 1.75 and equal to or less than 3.50 units per acre
- Residential Development greater than 3.50 and equal to or less than 5.00 units per acre.
- Residential Development greater than 5.00 and equal to or less than 8.00 units per acre.
- Residential Development greater than 8.00 and equal to or less than 15.00 units per acre.
- Residential Development greater than 15.00 units per acre.

COMMERCIAL

- Office Commercial Uses
- Community Commercial Uses
- Regional Commercial Uses
- Heavy Commercial

INDUSTRIAL

- Light Industrial
- General Industrial

MIXED USE

- Urban Mixed-Use
- Village Mixed-Use
- Airport Related Mixed-Use

PARKS

- Park
- Linear Park

SPECIAL USE

- Special Use
- Floodway

Further description of these categories may be found in Appendix C: Land Use Categories.

Secondary Land Use Categories

Secondary land use categories designate areas where some characteristic of the site has a modifying effect on the primary land use, so that the two uses (both primary and secondary) should be considered together in making land use decisions for the site. Secondary land use categories can be used to identify and preserve the character of land possessing special environmental, natural or historical characteristics. Careful attention should be given to the secondary land use recommendation in regard to development proposals.

In this plan, one secondary land use category has been designated: Environmentally Sensitive. Steeply sloped areas, aquifers or other waterbody resources, and significant stands of old-growth forest are examples of site characteristics subject to this designation.

Indexing

Another key element of the Comprehensive Plan is the use of an indexing system. Indexing is a method of numerically assigning an alternate land use recommendation to an area. Where the Comprehensive Plan uses indexing, the primary recommendation is identified by a color and the alternate land use recommendation by the index number. Indexing is most often used in those areas where the primary land use recommendation requires some public expenditure for implementation; for example, the acquisition of park land.

The primary land use recommendation represents the most appropriate and acceptable use for an area. The alternate land use is considered less appropriate than the primary land use. Unless it is clearly demonstrated to the Metropolitan Development Commission or Board of Zoning Appeals that development of the alternate recommendation would adequately protect the major features of the primary recommendation, the alternate use should be deemed inappropriate. However, the City may not use the Plan's recommendations or zoning as a tool to take private land.

Critical Areas

The Comprehensive Plan also designates critical areas. Each critical area exhibits an unusual character, important location, or significant infrastructure need that warrants a high degree of scrutiny. Critical area recommendations address significant land use issues that require more detailed information than that shown on the General Land Use Maps. The critical area text documents and explains why a certain area is considered critical and presents additional information about the area. The Metropolitan Development Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals should use this information to make decisions on land use petitions filed on or near these locations.

Critical areas should experience the greatest development or redevelopment pressure and become key elements in the Plan's implementation. While most critical areas consist of vacant property, vacancy is not an essential element. These areas are found in all seven stages of development; however, most critical areas are in the rapidly developing portions of Marion County, especially Stage 6, because the land use patterns and resulting transition lines in those areas are currently being formed.

Goals and Recommendations

The following goals and recommendations focus on guiding land use decisions. Tables of recommendations follow the goal statements. The recommendation tables are divided into three sections for ease of reference. The first section looks at issues pertaining to the environment, infrastructure and transportation. The second section looks at issues that are manifested at a county-wide level such as those pertaining to the economy, social and cultural concerns and Marion County's relationships with surrounding jurisdictions. The third section looks at issues that are typically manifested on a neighborhood level, although they may occur in many locations around the County. These issues typically involve housing, redevelopment or strengthening of community based organizations.

Recommendations for ordinance changes and revisions to planning and zoning procedures related to land use may be found in Chapter Nine: Implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. It expresses the land use goals of this plan and explains the principles underlying the land use plan recommendations.